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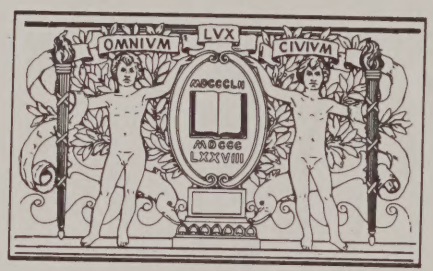

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Statement on BTPR Southwest Corridor Report

Presented by: Robert T. Kenney, BRA Director

October 30, 1972

We are not here to decide whether another road is to be built. There is a much larger question than that at issue. The considerations are related to the present and future quality of life in the City and the Boston region. The decisions made here will not only affect a large segment of the City directly but will give us an opportunity to set basic transportation policies for decades to come.

THE EXPRESSWAY

After an assessment of future transportation needs and their relationship to the total enviroment, BRA is convinced that a new expressway in the Southwest Corridor is neither necessary nor desirable in transportation terms.

The intensive use of the automobile in downtown Boston poses undesirable problems of noise, congestion, safety, pollution, and demands on scarce land area. The automobile must be controlled and limitations must be placed on core-oriented peak hour automobile travel. At the same time, the accessibility of the downtown core must be improved through a vast upgrading of public transit facilities. The daytime densities of Boston demand high-density, space-conserving access.

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To keep the core and the region strong and growing, new access must be added through massive physical and operational improvements to transit. In the Southwest Corridor, it is rail improvements we must look to, not an expressway.

A new expressway would create impossible traffic impacts at the downtown end, both where such an expressway would meet the Southeast expressway and on the downtown street and parking system. The rejection of another radial highway into the Central Artery reflects not only the City's desire to avoid another I-93 problem; it happens also to be the BTPR's own findings that "additional radial expressway capacity serving the core area is not essential to the long-range future of the region as a whole or of the core." If we increase capacity of the expressways feeding into downtown, we will simply encourage greater use of the automobile, in spite of increased downtown congestion.

TRANSIT

In the Southwest corridor, extensive transit can be provided for the first time. The BRA is now participating with the BTPR and community groups in a more detailed analysis of transit strategies which include alternatives using combinations of rapid transit, commuter rail and dual mode service, as well as various configurations and priorities. A definitive policy

statement will not be possible until the study is completed in the immediate future. We can state now, however, that the basic transit framework must include a relocated Orange Line from the South Cove Tunnel to Forest Hills; removal of the Washington Street elevated structure; rapid line-haul service to West Roxbury, Needham, and Canton along with adequate park and ride facilities; a new inner circumferential transit service, possibly PRT; and new service between Dudley and Mattapan.

The design of the transit and arterial road improvements require removal of the Penn Central embankment and funding policies should reflect this. The City gives this very high priority and cannot envision major development decisions being made in the corridor without allowing for depression of rail service. The design should also include space in the rail right-of-way for five tracks, so that express service can be supplied to the region's outer suburban rail customers. Provision must also be made for interstate rail service, including the proposed high speed ground transportation to New York and Washington.

We do not entirely dismiss the desirability of operational improvements to the existing street system. We can improve safety and levels of service and channel traffic away from areas where through movements are detrimental. The proposed new

arterial from Forest Hills to Jackson Square is favored as the most desirable arterial improvement in the corridor.

IMPACTS OF AN EXPRESSWAY

The demolition in Roxbury and Jamaica Plain has already removed a million dollars annually from city tax revenues. The remaining demolition to occur would remove a further million dollars. Already some three hundred businesses have been taken and a further seventy would go if the expressway were built. This represents a loss of over fifteen hundred jobs gone and sixteen hundred still to go, mostly in manufacturing and many held by minority workers. The City cannot afford these losses.

Already nearly eight hundred homes have been taken and the total, if the expressway were built, would be well over a thousand.

The expressway also presents a serious threat to the enviroment of the Southwest. In the Fowl Meadow area it would threaten an important regional open space and potential water supply. It would generate air pollution levels much higher than those permitted by Federal standards. It would significantly increase noise levels in the corridor, despite its being in a depression. In many areas the expressway right-of-way would be a physical or aesthetic barrier because of its width and, in places, its height.

The BTPR report contains proposals for off-setting some of these impacts. We have very serious doubts about the effectiveness of such proposals and whether they would ever get funded or implemented.

For example, in proposing that over $30 million be spent on non-transportation elements of the expressway, BTPR is seeking an unprecedented commitment from the Federal government and even the joint developments proposed do not achieve much. We will not be seduced by gimmicks, particularly for an unnecessary expressway. Even the so-called limited-use expressway leaves us skeptical, both in terms of the State's ability to manage the system and the type and volume of traffic it would draw. In fact, if we can achieve all of the transit concepts we propose, the limited-use expressway may not even be necessary.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The clearance of more than a hundred acres of land between Forest Hills and the Central Artery presents us with a tremendous opportunity to rebuild the inner city, to improve the old street network, to develop nodes of growth at transit stations, to provide neighborhood facility and housing sites, and much-needed open space. Because the area is so large and because there is such a need for developable space, we feel it is vital for the redevelopment of this area to take place under the care

of the City. The BRA is more than ready to play its part in both the planning and implementation for this area. We look to the State DPW to write off any costs of acquisition and make this land available at a nominal price.

Therefore, even with large federal highway funds for joint development, which we seriously doubt would be forthcoming in the necessary quantity, the development potential of the corridor seems to us much greater if it is linked to transit station nodes without a highway. Let me emphasize, there are absolutley no compelling transportation or land use reasons for an expressway in the Southwest Corridor. The City of Boston prefers the travel benefits and development potential of a mass transportation system in this corridor, complemented by justifiable improvements to the City's street system.

We look back at the Sixties and see it as a decade when Boston's downtown and its economy underwent an amazing transformation. We used the renewal program to create one of the most attractive urban cores in the country and to build a new, high-grade service economy. In ten years hence, what will they say of us? Will they say we made Boston a monument to the automobile? Or will this period be cited for its reason and judgement by bringing a new equilibrium among the more important elements in the life of the City?